

## Office of Professional Accountability (OPA)

### Commendations & Complaints Report

### May 2003

#### Commendations:

Commendations Received in May: 52

Commendations Received to Date: 361

| Rank                     | Summary   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 4 Officers               | I am writing to express my gratitude to the 4 officers that responded to my 911 call about a homeless man. The man was doubled-over and hobbling and said he was experiencing severe back pain. Officers arrived shortly after my call, and one was a trained EMT. He assessed the man's condition ensuring proper medical attention. Witnessing this, gave me reassurance of the high quality of service the citizens of Seattle get from their Police Department.   |
| 2 Officers               | Thank you, to the two officers for their professionalism and compassion dealing with issues surrounding our grandson's severe disabilities. We were very impressed.   |
| Sergeant                 | A heart-felt thank you for your presentation to the University of Washington School of Public Affairs. Your presentation was informative and thoughtful. Your demonstrated ability to remain calm, reasonable and engaged when challenged about some fundamental law enforcement practices and beliefs was admirable. Your conduct and role modeling taught my students a valuable lesson. Thanks!  |
| Civilian                 | Thank you for assisting me with an assault case. The victim did not speak English and has been in a nursing home for an extended time due to the assault. Without your interpreting skills, we would not have been able to exchange vital information about the case. Thank you for your help.  |
| 2 Officers               | Two officers saved the life of an 82 year-old motorist who had a heart attack. They arrived at the scene, assessed the situation and began CPR until the medics arrived. The officers should be commended and recognized for such an outstanding effort.  |
| 2 Officers               | I would like to thank the two officers that attended our neighborhood block watch meeting. The two officers were very patient and knowledgeable. They answered all of our questions and listened carefully to our concerns. Thank you.  |
| Officer                  | Thank you for allowing me to go on a ride-along. You demonstrated great professionalism in handling the domestic violence call. Similarly, your handling of the arrest for suspected DUI following the traffic accident was both efficient and compassionate. Keep up the great work.   |
| 2 Officers               | While originally embarrassed to call for assistance regarding an ongoing harassing neighbor issue, we realized it was time for Police intervention to prevent our neighbor from causing further damage to our property or to us. The officers that responded were exactly what you would hope for in a police response. They were patient, professional and thorough. They asked the right questions and took the time to gather evidence, assuring us that we did the right thing by calling. We are so impressed and thankful for the assistance. |
| Officer                  | You are being commended for your participation in the 2003 University Street Fair. Thank you for devoting many hours to this important project and for your assistance in planning, coordinating and implementing the event. Your efforts were an essential element to the Fair's success.  |
| 1 Detective & 3 Officers | Thank you for your diligence in recovering the stolen vehicles. The law enforcement community is fortunate to have a partnership with LoJack. (LoJack   |

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
|                          | technology aides in the tracking and recovery of stolen vehicles.)   |
| 2 Sergeants & 9 Officers | The Federal Bureau of Investigations, U.S. Department of Justice would like to recognize the fine work of several SPD officers. Their cooperative efforts led to the arrest of a suspect responsible for robbing four Washington Mutual Banks.   |
| Detective                | I would like to pay special tribute to a member of the Seattle Police Department. The detective that has been working on my case has kept me informed, explained the process to me, and has been very patient. Whenever I call or email him I always get a prompt response. This Detective truly cares about people and it shows in the way that he treats them. Thank you.  |
| Detective                | We would like to thank one of your outstanding Detectives in the Sexual Assault & Child Abuse Unit. She arranged to have a group of us tour the unit. She was very professional and she demonstrated a vast degree of expertise along with a very winning personality. Thanks for the tour.  |
| Officer                  | I would like to thank an officer for his outstanding investigation and report. The officer's report was indicative of the type of work completed by him everyday. He is diligent, methodical, and very dedicated.  |
| Sergeant                 | I went to my van this morning and noticed that it had been involved in a hit & run accident. I found a police report on the windshield and it sounds like you caught the guy that hit my car and arrested him for a DUI. I really want to thank you for what you did.  |
| Detective                | I would like to commend an SPD Detective for responding to threats from a student that wanted to "shoot up" a local High School. This student also threatened other students by telling them he was going to assault them, that he had a pipe bomb, and weapons. The student was investigated and was expelled. The Detective's hard work possibly saved the lives of the students and staff at the school.  |
| Dispatcher               | South Precinct officers had a suspect contained in a residence. The suspect was a "third striker" with an active \$150,000 assault warrant, and a known gang member. An officer called SWAT for assistance. The Dispatcher that responded gave very clear and concise directions that led directly to the residence. We would like to thank the outstanding work of this Dispatcher.   |
| 2 Officers               | Two officers informed me that I backed my truck into another vehicle at the lumberyard. My truck was fully loaded with lumber and I did not notice that I slightly dented another car. I was so embarrassed. The officers quickly calmed me. They were very professional and thorough, while treating me with the utmost respect. While it was stressful to be confronted by the Police, I was thankful for their approach.                                    |
| 1 Sergeant & 2 Officers  | A local university professor received threatening email from a known suspect. The email was very specific and descriptive in how he was going to kill the professor and her family because of their religion. The suspect had been arrested years earlier for stalking the professor. The officers showed professionalism and foresight throughout the investigation. The officers did an excellent job handling this incident. Thank you.                     |
| 2 Civilians              | Thank you for the presentation on personal safety. Your personal expertise and professionalism on the topic were clear. We were all impressed and appreciative of the practical information you presented to us. Thanks for providing such great service!  |
| Officer                  | I was trying to reach my landlord for 5 ½ hours and I just kept getting a busy signal. I was worried because my landlord is an elderly man that lives alone, so I called 911. I asked the operator to have an officer come by and check up on him. I subsequently received a call from both the officer and my landlord. The phone was off the hook without his knowledge and he was fine. I am thankful that the officer was able to check up on him. Thanks. |
| Detective & Officer      | A female victim came home to find her apartment had been broken into and two juvenile suspects were still in her apartment. One suspect grabbed the victim by  |

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|                       | the face and threw her to the ground. He then choked her and threatened to kill her if she did not tell them where the money was. The second suspect found her purse and they left the apartment. The detective responded to the scene with a photomontage and the victim immediately identified one of the suspects. A "Special Bulletin" was sent to all the precincts about the suspect. The suspect was located and apprehended a week later. Great team work! |
| Officer               | As a citizen of Seattle, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude of the public servants within the Seattle Police force. An incident of vandalism occurred where I work and the officer that responded was foremost a professional and an outstanding representative of those who protect and serve our fine city. Thanks!   |
| Officer               | I am writing to express my sincere appreciation for the officer that stopped to help me with my stalled vehicle. Thank you for calling AAA; I am most grateful.  |
| Dispatcher            | I wanted to thank the non-emergency operator and the employee who called me back. This was a small theft report, but it was handled promptly. The practical suggestions from the staff were invaluable. Thank you!   |
| Lieutenant & Civilian | We would like to thank the Seattle Police Department Lieutenant and staff member that provided a basic photography training session recently. Our staff found the training to be very informative and beneficial. We will use this photography training when documenting our responsibilities.   |

## May 2003 Closed Cases:

*Cases involving alleged misconduct of officers and employees in the course of their official public duties are summarized below. Identifying information has been removed.*

*Cases are reported by allegation type. One case may be reported under more than one category.*

### UNNECESSARY FORCE

| Synopsis  | Action Taken   |
|---|--|
| Complainant alleges that the named officer used unnecessary force while arresting the subject for domestic violence assault. The complainant also alleged that the named officer did not provide his identification when asked.                                   | The only information that supported the complainant's allegation is her initial call to IS-OPA. Neither the complainant, subject, nor alleged witnesses responded to repeated requests for contact. The named officer denies using any force other than to escort the subject out, and other witness officers confirm that no force was used. Finding – UNFOUNDED.   |
| Complainant alleged named officers used unnecessary force when they arrested her brother outside of a nightclub.  | The evidence shows that the subject was intoxicated and causing a disturbance at the nightclub. He assaulted a bouncer and did significant property damage. When officers responded, the subject refused to respond to police. Force was used to take the subject to the ground and to handcuff him. The force used was documented and screened. Finding – EXONERATED.   |
| Complainant alleged the named officer used unnecessary force during her arrest after response to a domestic violence assault call where it was reported that the complainant was armed with a gun. The complainant also alleged the named officer used profanity. | The evidence, including the statements of several civilian witnesses, showed that the complainant was hostile, uncooperative and refused to follow verbal commands. The officers used force to take her to the ground and to gain control so the complainant could be handcuffed. The force was reported and screened by a supervisor. Finding – EXONERATED. None of the other witnesses heard the alleged profanity. Finding – UNFOUNDED. |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Complainant alleged that named officer, while working off duty as security, used excessive force in removing him from the premises. | Independent witnesses dispute complainant's account that named officer used unnecessary force. Evidence showed that officer placed his hands on subject and escorted him out the door. Finding – UNFOUNDED. |
|---|---|

**IMPROPER SEARCH**

| Synopsis   | Action Taken  |
|--|---|
| Complainant alleged the named officer conducted an improper search during her arrest for a drug violation. | The investigation determined that the officer conducted a search incident to arrest using proper search techniques. The evidence showed there was no officer of the same sex as the arrestee readily available to assist. Finding – EXONERATED.   |
| Complainant alleged that the stop and pat-down search of his vehicle were improper.                        | The investigation showed several facts and circumstances that would raise questions about the legality of the stop and search. However, the evidence was inconclusive and there was no evidence of a deliberate violation. Finding – EXONERATED. Concerns about the stop and search were forwarded to the commander for consideration of additional training. |

**CUBO/Misuse of Authority**

| Synopsis   | Action Taken  |
|--|---|
| Complainant alleged the named officer was rude during a traffic stop outside Safeco Field and made false statements in the citation. | The preponderance of evidence showed that the officer had been rude to the complainant. There was not a preponderance of evidence to establish whether any false statements were made. Findings: CUBO – SUSTAINED; Misuse of Authority – NOT SUSTAINED. |

**FAILURE TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION**

| Synopsis   | Action Taken   |
|--|--|
| Chain of command alleged the named employee failed to take appropriate action when a driver with a suspended license was permitted to drive away from the scene. | Investigation confirmed the employee did not follow proper procedure. Finding – SUSTAINED. |

**Definitions of Findings:**

**Sustained:** The allegation of misconduct is supported by the evidence.

**Not Sustained:** The evidence neither proves nor disproves the allegation of misconduct.

**Exonerated:** The event described did occur, and the actions taken by the officer(s) were lawful and proper.

**Unfounded:** The allegation of misconduct did not occur as described.

**Administratively Unfounded or Administratively Inactivated:** The case has a fundamental legal or procedural defect or the involved personnel cannot be identified. Inactivated cases may be re-opened if new information is received.

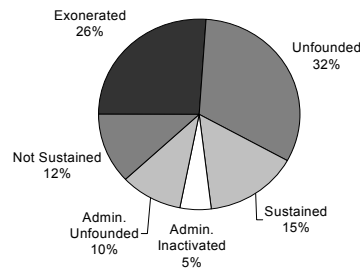
## Status of OPA Contacts to Date:

### 2002 Contacts

|   | December 2002 | Jan. - Dec. 2002 |
|---|---------------|------------------|
| Contact Logs                              | 50            | 573              |
| Cases Assigned for Supervisory Review     | 11            | 104              |
| Cases Assigned for Investigation (IS; LI) | 17            | 201              |
| Cases Closed                              | 12            | 159*             |
| Commendations                             | 27            | 1,416            |

\*includes 2002 cases closed in 2003

**CHART A**  
**Dispositions of Allegations in Completed Investigations**  
**2002 Cases**  
**N=304 Allegations in 159 cases**



### 2003 Contacts

|  | May 2003 | Jan-Dec 2003 |
|--|----------|--------------|
| Contact Logs                             | 43       | 252          |
| Cases Assigned for Supervisory Review    | 7        | 38           |
| Cases Assigned for Investigation (IS;LI) | 16       | 73           |
| Commendations                            | 52       | 361          |